



Fact Sheet:



Narcotic Treatment Program Licensing Branch: Replacement Narcotic Therapy

It is estimated that there are over 125,000 people residing in California addicted to the intravenous use of heroin. Under law, persons addicted to heroin or other opiates or opiate-like drugs may qualify for treatment with methadone or LAAM, synthetic narcotics. Like any narcotic, these medications produce physical dependence, but they are longer acting than heroin and are ingested orally rather than injected, rendering the use of needles unnecessary to the patient's recovery.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MAINTENANCE TREATMENT

The use of medications in the treatment of narcotic addiction has been shown to be effective for selected narcotic addicted patients. There are two medications currently approved to treat narcotic addiction in California, they are methadone and LAAM (levo-alpha-acetylmethadol). These medications are used as one component of a comprehensive treatment program for narcotic addiction, along with a medical evaluation, treatment planning, and counseling. These synthetic opiates used in replacement narcotic therapy, appear to normalize brain chemistry and permit resumption of a normal life. Further, because these medications are ingested orally, the risk of transmitting disease through sharing of contaminated needles is eliminated.

Compared with other forms of treatment for narcotic addiction, replacement narcotic

therapy is considered to be highly effective and relatively low-cost. Maintenance treatment decreases illicit drug use, assists in preventing the transmission of the AIDS virus among drug users, saves and/or improves the lives of newborn children born to narcotic-addicted mothers, increases employment, and decreases criminal activity.

NARCOTIC TREATMENT PROGRAM LICENSING BRANCH

The Narcotic Treatment Program Licensing Branch (NTPLB) of the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) licenses narcotic treatment program services and regulates the delivery of replacement narcotic therapy services to patients. The NTPLB evaluates applications for new narcotic treatment program licenses, requests for program size increases for existing licensees, and conducts annual on-site inspections for 149 licensed programs at 125 sites. California's narcotic treatment programs have the aggregate capacity to treat more than 38,800 people a day. Most of this treatment capability is used for maintenance (approximately 32,300 people), with the remainder (6,500) undergoing 21-day methadone detoxification.

Onsite licensing inspections are conducted to insure the licensees' compliance with the state and federal laws and regulations governing narcotic treatment programs. Licensees that do not comply are subject to a process of progressive discipline, ranging

from written corrective action plans and civil penalties to temporary suspension or permanent revocation of the license.

Continued Growth Is Expected

The size of California's narcotic treatment capacity is increasing each year. This is attributed to the increased public awareness of the benefits of replacement narcotic therapy, resulting in an increase in the service capability by 37 percent in California between 1991 and 1999.

FUNDING

Funding for replacement narcotic therapy comes from a variety of sources. Many patients pay for treatment from their own funds. For those not able to pay public funding is available, including State general funds, federal block grant, Drug Medi-Cal funds, and local government funds.